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Women's Health Month: Pink, Pink and More Pink

Filed under [Women's Health](#) {[no comments](#)}

By: Lt. Cheryl Castro & Lt. Jenique Keys, certified nurse midwives, Naval Hospital Camp Pendleton

Pink bows, pink tutus, and pink ribbons are all signs that [breast cancer awareness month](#) is here. We wear the pink ribbons, we buy the pink soccer socks, but do we really know what we should be “aware” of this month?



After skin cancer, the most commonly diagnosed cancer for women in the US is [breast cancer](#). Data from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) indicates that more than 200,000 women are diagnosed annually in the US with breast cancer, and more than 40,000 women die from the disease. Most breast cancers are found in women 50 years of age or older, but approximately 11 percent of all new cases are found in women younger than 45 years of age. These statistics highlight important questions that women should consider.

For example, how often should you conduct a self-breast exam or schedule a screening with your health care provider? At what age should you receive a mammogram?

As women's health clinicians, we regularly encounter patients who do not know the answers to these questions. We still have a knowledge gap when it comes to breast health.

There are some important and serious messages behind all the pink paraphernalia. To start with, every woman should conduct a self-breast exam monthly, schedule a clinical breast exam yearly and starting at age 40, and consider receiving a mammogram annually. Leading health care organizations differ in age and frequency recommendations for clinical examination and mammography (see chart below).

Mammography Screening Recommendations

Mammogram Frequency(years of age)	U.S. Preventive Task Force	American Cancer Society	American Medical Association	American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists	American College of Radiology
	Optional/				

40-49	individual decision based on context	Annual (starting at age 45)*	Annual	Annual	Annual
50-74	Every 2 years	Every other year after 55*	Annual	Annual	Annual
75 and older	Insufficient evidence to assess the benefits and harm	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual

* The revised [American Cancer Society](#) guidelines were recently issued in October 2015. Previous guidelines recommended an initial mammogram at age 40. This variation in recommendations can be confusing, which is why you should discuss risk factors and concerns with your health care provider in order to make an informed decision about when to begin annual mammograms.

Knowing and following these guidelines is only half the battle. The other half is performing the self-breast exam correctly. For additional information see <http://www.nationalbreastcancer.org/breast-self-exam> or schedule a consultation with your health care provider today.

In conclusion – wear the pink! Not only because it increases breast cancer awareness, but it also serves as a reminder to be vigilant about your own breast health.

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